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III. Economic Life.

1. Communications, Roads, and Bridges.

Among the Ch'iang there are no telephones, radios, or telegraph lines. There are no newspapers, and no books excepting those written by the Chinese and possessed by the few who can read them. Chinese-built roads connect the cities and towns in the valleys. Even here no wheeled vehicles can be used—only "hwagers" and sedan chairs, riding horses, and pack animals. On the Chinese roads some carry loads on the ends of bien dan or poles, but many carry their loads on their backs. Between the Ch'iang homes and villages the roads are unpaved footpaths, very narrow and often very steep. Frequently they go over or along the sides of steep precipices. It is not strange that the Ch'iang generally walk and always carry their loads on their backs. News is passed along by word of mouth, and naturally it is sometimes inaccurate. [203]

The bridges resemble those of the Chinese and of their various neighbors in this region. A small creek may be waded, or crossed by stepping on large stones. Some bridges are merely logs or boards laid across the streams. One type of bridge is the false or corbelled arch. From both sides large timbers reach out one beyond the other, until they meet above the middle of the stream. A bridge often consists of a single bamboo cable. Two hollow wooden half-cylinders are tied securely around the cable. The person or baggage is tied to this, and when released slides half way across. Then the person pulls himself hand over hand the rest of the way, or the baggage is pulled to the opposite shore by means of a small rope. The larger rope bridges have nine or ten bamboo cables underfoot on which boards are laid, and four or more cables on each side. The longest bridges have several wooden trestles, the bridge sagging down between. As one walks over, the whole bridge shakes.

The rivers are too rapid for boats, which between Mou Chow and Yin Shiu Wan 映秀湾 and between Wei Chow and Tsagulow are not even used as ferries.

2. Money, Marketing, Bartering, and Borrowing.

Chinese money is the currency of the Ch'iang. Until the latter part of the Manchu dynasty it was silver ingots or lump silver, then it was silver dollars. Now it is Chinese bank bills.

There is some buying and selling in the small villages. This is

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done in the houses or in Chinese temples or on the streets. Money may be paid, or exchange may be accomplished by means of barter. If two objects are bartered and they are of unequal value, the balance may be paid in cash or another object may be thrown in to make things even.

The principal market places are in the Chinese cities. Here the Ch'iang bring produce--firewood, corn, beans, wheat, buckwheat, pepper, walnuts fruit, vegetables, chickens, pork, mutton, eggs, hides, etc. With the money they purchase salt, cotton cloth, vegetable oil, and other commodities which they take home.

The interest paid on loans is very high. It varies from sixty or seventy to over three hundred per cent. This is one of the handicaps now faced by the Ch'iang. If the borrower does not pay, the lender sometimes sends a poor person to live in the home of the borrower and eat his food, smoke his tobacco, drink his tea, and sleep in his bed. This may cost the borrower a lot of money but in the end he must pay all the money owed, both capital and interest. He is not credited with what the poor man has cost him. Sometimes the lender comes and takes away a pig, a goat, or a cow. Often the interest is paid in corn. For a loan of one hundred dollars the yearly interest is from two to six dou or pecks of corn, so that the rate of interest depends on the market value of the corn.

3. Habitations and Villages.

The houses are built of unhewn stones plastered together with clay. Advantage is taken of the flat and smooth sides, so that the walls of the houses appear smooth, and the corners square. There are two or more stories. The first story consists of a small open court and rooms or pens for the domestic animals. The floors of the pens are covered with small twigs, grass, or straw, which are trend upon for weeks and mixed with the offal of the animals, and later is used for fertilizer. People live on the second floor where dogs, cats, chickens, and sometimes other domestic animals and fowls range. The roofs are flat, and at the rear of each roof is an open shed in which corn and other grains are stored, and where the women sometimes do their weaving. Similar stone houses are widely used in the highlands of western Szechwan, Si Kang, and eastern Tibet. On the roof the grain is dried, flailed and winnowed, and here in fair weather the inmates visit and look around at

tribe. There /83/ are also fixed rules about the use of pastures during the various seasons (first and second summer pasture and winter pasture). The tent communities do not quarrel about pasture-lands. Violating regulations with regard to pastureland is punished by the t'ou-mu with a fine which must be paid in butter. For every yak that breaks out beyond the boundaries of the pasture its owner must pay two chin of butter.

There seems to be no particular hunting rights, but the t'ou-mu has the authority to forbid hunting under certain circumstances. Thus, for example, during my stay among the Mewu-Fantzu, the shooting of groundhogs was forbidden for definite reasons. In such cases hunting rights are not granted even for money. If a person is caught violating the rules, he is first beaten and then required to pay a fine.

There are no sales transactions involving legal contracts. Stock is sold by the head. The Fantzu are very adroit traders; there are usually no disputes in business deals.

Judicial authority is only theoretically in the hands of the Chinese district administration; in practice it is left to the Fantzu themselves. The Chinese court does not prosecute punishable actions of the Fantzu. Even when a Fantzu has wronged a Chinese, he is not prosecuted directly by a Chinese court, but at the proposal of the district official by the t'ou-mu who, as we have said above, is the superior judge. It is only when very influential Chinese have been robbed that the Chinese authorities send out a military posse. The Chinese for their part do not dare harm the Fantzu, for fear of their revenge. They are glad when the Fantzu leave them alone. Two years ago (1934) Chinese soldiers killed seven or eight Fantzu, whereupon the t'ou-mu immediately sent out his warriors to pursue the Chinese. However, there was no incident because a Mohammedan /84/ officer acted as mediator. A fine of $100 was demanded for each man slain. The incident shows that the Mohammedan played a neutral, respected role between Fantzu and Chinese.

The t'ou-mu can prosecute a crime only if it takes place within the territory of his tribe. If the criminal escapes into another territory, he can pursue him only as far as the border.

The councils of the ts'aowa groups enjoy about the same authority as the t'ou-mu. Their task is a little more arduous since in judicial cases and the pursuit of a criminal, they are appealed to first. The ts'aowa council, however, is required to ask the t'ou-mu for permission to pursue a criminal. As a rule t'ou-mu and ts'aowa work together in such cases.